

guarding the gates so that the Londoners could not leave the city, while the meeting ground itself was occupied by the King's troops. As fast as the bodies of rebels came up from the villages, they were seized or dispersed. Before dawn all was over save the hanging Sir John Oldcastle himself escaped, and took refuge in his native district and the Welsh mountains beyond, where he lurked for three years longer in perpetual conspiracy, until he was finally captured, hanged as a traitor and burnt as a heretic. 'Oldcastle/ says Shakespeare, 'died a martyr,' and though he also died a traitor, there are few who will deny him a claim to the honourable as well as to the odious title.<sup>1</sup>

The affair of St. Giles' Fields bears a certain resemblance to the Chartist Demonstration of 1848. In both cases there was unnecessary alarm, caused by a movement which was not really strong enough to be dangerous ; in both cases the previous occupation of the ground where the rioters were to meet prevented any serious gathering, and in both cases most of the demands, which the insurgents failed to secure by physical force, were brought about by the working of time. But here the resemblance ceases, for no evidence has come to hand of any other motive save religion for the rising of January 1414. The rebels were not in league either with lords of the Mortimer and Plantagenet factions, or with social agitators.<sup>2</sup>

Only one knight, besides Sir John Oldcastle, and no person of higher rank, was implicated in the abortive rising, ~a fact the more remarkable since up till that time lords and knights had been considered the strength of Lollardry. Although many of the upper classes had been influenced by the doctrines of the sect, and although many continued to nurse dislike of the wealth, the insolence and the overgrown privileges of the clergy, until these feelings broke out in the time of Henry the Eighth, there were found but few gentlemen ready to share during the fifteenth century the lot of a proscribed and rebel party. The \* sudden insurrection,'

<sup>1</sup> *Diet. of Nat. Biog.*; *Wasc. Z.*, 433-50; *Pol. Poems*, ii. 244; *Bam say*, i. chap. xiii. and pp. 25a~i' *Wali.*, ii- 291-7, 80f>-7, 327-8. » See Ap.